

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 AID-20 COA-02 /134 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/CEN:DLAZAR:PW

APPROVED BY ARA:WGBOWDLER

----- 081214

P R 112315Z JAN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 006848

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, HO, ES

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH FONMIN BATRES

GUATEMALA PASS TO ROCAP

1. LUNCHEON CONVERSATION BATRES AND AMBASSADOR GALVEZ WITH BOWDLER AND LAZAR, JANUARY 11, SEEMED TO INDICATE SLIGHT HARDENING OF HONDURAN POSITION REGARDING FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. BATRES TOOK THE POSITION THAT, PARTICULARLY GIVEN SALVADORAN RENUNCIATION OF ACT OF BOGOTA AND FOLLOWING FAILURE OF MEXICAN TALKS TO PRODUCE AGREEMENT, HONDURAN PUBLIC OPINION WOULD BE OPPOSED TO GOH MOVE TO "SIMPLY SIT DOWN AT A TABLE AND TALK SOME MORE." BATRES SAID THAT SOME POSITIVE MOVE BY EL SALVADOR WOULD BE NECESSARY BEFORE HONDURAS COULD GO INTO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS.

2. BATRES RECOUNTED YESTERDAY'S MEETING OF COMMITTEE OF SEVEN MORE OR LESS ALONG THE LINES OF OUR EARLIER CABLE.

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WHEN DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES ASKED BATRES WHERE THE

MATTER GOES FROM HERE, HE SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW. HE INDICATED THAT THERE PROBABLY WOULD BE ANOTHER CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING ALTHOUGH HE SAID THAT NO FIRM DATE HAD YET BEEN SET. HE ALSO SAID THAT HONDURAS HAS VERY MUCH IN MIND THE FACT

THAT EL SALVADOR'S DENUCIATION OF THE ACT OF BOGOTA WILL TAKE EFFECT IN NOVEMBER SO THAT ANY MOVE BY HONDURAS FOR ARBITRATION UNDER THAT ACT WOULD HAVE TO BE STARTED IN A TIMELY MANNER, THUS, BY IMPLICATION, SETTING FIXED OUTER LIMITS TO THE TIME DURING WHICH HONDURAS WOULD BE WILLING TO WORK AT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS OR OTHER METHODS OF SETTLEMENT.

3. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE USE OF GOOD OFFICES MIGHT HELP FACILITATE AN AGREEMENT, HIS REPLY WAS NEGATIVE. HE SAID HE FELT THE TIME HAD PASSED FOR THE USE OF THAT DEVICE. ON THE OTHER HAND BATRES NEVER INDICATED UNWILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE SEEKING A SOLUTION ALTHOUGH HE EXPRESSED DOUBT WITH RESPECT TO THE POLITICAL WILL, ON THE SALVADORAN SIDE, TO FINALLY SETTLE THE BORDER QUESTION WHICH IS, OF COURSE, THE KEY ISSUE.

4. THERE WAS ONE SLIGHTLY OPTIMISTIC NOTE IN THE CONVERSATION. ALTHOUGH INSISTING THAT THE BORDER QUESTION MUST BE SETTLED BEFORE ANY ACTION COULD BE TAKEN ON THE OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS OPENING THE ROAD OR ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS, BATRES DID SAY THAT THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THE TOTAL BORDER HAD TO BE DELIMITED. HE STATED THAT IT WOULD BE ENOUGH, FOR HONDURAN PURPOSES, IF AGREEMENT WERE TO BE REACHED ON THOSE AREAS STILL IN DISPUTE AND SOME AGREEMENT ARRIVED AT AS TO A MECHANISM WHICH COULD LATER DEFINE THE BORDER IN THE DISPUTED AREAS. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THE MARITIME BORDER IN THE GULF OF FONSECA COULD BE LEFT FOR LATER AND NEED NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE SAME PACKAGE. HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE GOH COULD LIVE QUITE WELL, POLITICALLY, WITH AN AGREEMENT ALONG THE ABOVE LINES BASED ON THE 1972 ANTIGUA AGREEMENTS.

5. ON A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT MATTER, WHEN DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES URGED THAT HONDURAS CONTINUE WORKING AS CONFIDENTIAL

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PART OF THE HIGH LEVEL COMMISSION EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF AN AGREEMENT WITH EL SALVADOR, HE STATED THAT THE GOH INTENDED TO DO SO, AND INDEED, THAT HONDURAS WOULD BE CONVOKING A MEETING OF THE HLC IN TEGUCIGALPA IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, NEGOTIATIONS, CHIEFS OF STATE MEETINGS, POLICE INVESTIGATIONS, BORDER INCIDENTS, BOUNDARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE006848
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DLAZAR:PW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740146/aaaabrpp.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 SEP 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <09 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTERVIEW WITH FONMIN BATRES GUATEMALA PASS TO ROCAP
TAGS: PFOR, HO, ES
To: TEGUCIGALPA SAN SALVADOR
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005